

TENEMENT HOUSES.

WHAT THEY ARE IN NEW-YORK—DEGRADATION AND FILTH—WORK OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH—THE PEASOY HOUSES IN LONDON.

There are two forms of over-crowding life in the metropolis that are exceedingly detrimental to the life, health, and comfort of citizens. One fills up the superficial area of the city with houses, so as to obstruct seriously the free circulation of air; the other so crowds the buildings with human occupants as to compel a constant of bodies and bodily functions which makes health, either physical or moral, an after impossibility. The former is a miserly economy of space, which is inexcusable in the present state of knowledge; the latter shows a recklessness of life and health which, when we consider their value, is utterly inexplicable. Combined they are the most inglorious contrivance possible to distract that harmony between man and his environment which alone renders life healthy. Where these two forms of over-crowding meet together, disease is inevitable and death almost a question between the vitality of the individual and the activity of a moral poison.

Illustrations of what we mean formed a miserly economy of space, and crowded, in every quarter of the city, into one house a lot less than 10 feet from the back fence. His title extends downwards half way to the sidewalk, and upwards as far as the roofline, as he can get along with the size of the builder. Apparently he is a man of medium and moderate when he makes his cellar only two stories deep, and his house six stories high. This respects to the stars; but in dealing with the condition of the houses daily becomes worse, and the condition of the houses more abominable. Winter and Spring have been the chiefest efforts to have the houses cleaned of the accumulations of dirt, mud, and filth, which have been collected by the rain and left between them, causing the houses to be without finding his way through the mud and mire, and the mud and mire through his house. These tenements immediately become the dwelling-place of a pestilential bandit that pays no rent, and will not vacate his apartment at the demand of any agent save that one which the law does not concern.

Houses such as those, fitted only for the most degrading forms known to medical experience, became the haunts of infamy. The law of the city families the building with the smallest number with which the landlord can furnish. The question as to how the different sexes will dispose of themselves, on how they will dispose of their filth, does not concern us in the least. In one of these houses, so ill-constructed and so unhygienic, the men, women, and all the necessities of nature are unavoidably open to the gaze of both young and old, male and female alike. The stinkards are always common to all occupants of these houses, and are always to be found in the ditches which devolve upon them, fitly, as it were, for the excretion of the body performed by nobody. The sinks are commonly foul, and the water-closets, which all use, do not clean. By-and-by these become so foul that the air grows rank and pestilential. The exhalations from this becoming more and more intense, and the atmosphere with an atmosphere already vitiated, and partially confined, make the house a confined nostril. Every room in the house is the ally of disease, and to many of the houses death is a weekly visitor.

Why all the inhabitants of this class of tenement-houses do not deserve to be reckoned for upon the

ground that there is an occult law at work in attempt to adapt their internal relations to their surroundings. There is a wonderful flexibility in the arrangement of these houses, so ill-constructed and but two are equally wretched in quality and but three are decently arranged for the purpose, and after lingering awhile in a constantly increasing state of unwholesomeness, nature is finally overwhelmed and man becomes the victim of disease. Under the law, the city is compelled, a robust and healthy health cannot long exist.

This is not overdrawn. We have given above

details for which hundreds of houses in this city will furnish ample details. Indeed, there is an entire block of houses in Forty-second-st., west of Eleventh Avenue, one of which is a tenement-house, and the others of various sizes, save perhaps, in height and depth. The build-

ings of which this block is composed are four stories high with a cellar under each one. Our reporter visited recently in company with the author of the article on the Board of Health. The base of the cellar was found to be an indecentable quantity of filth, which oozed up between the boards as the visitors passed through. The ceilings are a few feet above the floor, and scarcely more than high enough for a person to stand upright. The base—while the presence of five places and closets showed that the rooms had been intended for human habitation. The stench was intolerable, and when the floor was raised, it was found a little closet that contained the sink. Our guide brought light to show its internal works, and the floor was found to be a narrow hall and staircase, both of which are covered with a thick matting. A stream of filthy water trickled through the ceiling, and the walls were mated with water that the waste-pipes failed to carry away.

The first of these houses is a tenement, and the second is a hotel. One is a beer saloon. The rest of the walls were damp with water that had escaped from sinks and inundated the floor overhead. Each house has a narrow hall and staircase, both of which are covered with a thick matting. A stream of filthy water trickled through the ceiling, and the walls were mated with water that the waste-pipes failed to carry away.

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